Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 PARIS 06155 011846Z

47
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 EURE-00 /069 W
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P R 011808Z MAR 76
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8337
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY TUNIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 06155

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, FR, AG
SUBJECT: MITTERRAND VISIT TO ALGERIA

1. SOCIALIST PARTY LEADER FRANCOIS MITTERRAND'S FEB. 25 - 27 VISIT TO ALGIERIA AS GUEST OF THE FLN WAS GIVEN LITTLE ADVANCE PUBLICITY. IT FELL DURING A PERIOD WHEN OTHER DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN PROBLEMS, INCLUDING CANTONAL ELECTIONS AND THE SAHARA CRISIS, WERE STEALING THE HEADLINES. BUT NOT LONG AFTER MITTERRAND'S ARRIVAL IN ALGIERS, WHEN PRESS SERVICES REPORTED HIS CONVERSATIONS WITH ALGERIAN LEADERS ABOUT "DETERIORATING FRANCO-ALGERIAN RELATIONS", THE VISIT BEGAN TO ASSUME THE PROPORTIONS OF A SIGNIFICANT FRENCH DOMESTIC POLITICAL CONTROVERSY RATHER THAN REMAINING A RELATIVELY MINOR FORAY OF THE PS INTO INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS.

2. MITTERRAND WAS ACCUSED BY ROGER CHINAUD, PRESIDENT OF THEIR PARLIAMENTARY GROUP, OF CRITICIZING FRENCH FOREIGN POLICY WHILE ABROAD, PM CHIRAC CHIMED IN TO SUGGEST THAT MITTERRAND SHOULD HAVE DISCUSSED FRANCO-ALGERIAN RELATIONS WITH FRANCE'S PRESIDENT BEFORE DOING
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 PARIS 06155 011846Z

SO WITH ALGERIA'S. DEFENSIVELY, MITTERRAND REPLIED

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006

THAT HE HAD COMPORTED HIMSELF AS A RESPONSIBLE POLITICIAN. THE DEBATE CREATED CONSIDERABLE PRESS COMMENTARY.

3. THIS OBSCURED THE ACTUAL RESULTS OF THE PS-FNL MEETINGS, DESIGNED, ACCORDING TO THE ALGERIANS, TO BRING TOGETHER THE TWO PEOPLES. MITTERRAND DID APPEAR TO PUT TO REST MEMORIES OF HIS ALGERIE FRANCAISE STAND DURING THE 1950S AND PS AND ALGERIAN SOURCES HAVE DESCRIBED THE VISIT AS SUCCESSFUL. HOWEVER, THE EXPECTED FINAL COMMUNIQUE DID NOT MATERIALIZE, REPORTEDLY BECAUSE MITTERRAND WAS UNWILLING TO GO AS FAR AS THE ALGERIANS DESIRED IN ENDORSING THEIR VIEWS ON THE MAGHREB, MIDDLE EAST AND THE NEW INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC ORDER. BUT THE REMARKS OF THE TWO SIDES MAKE IT CLEAR THAT THE ALGERIANS FOUND IN MITTERRAND A RECEPTIVE EAR FOR THEIR "REVOLUTIONARY" THIRD WORLD THESES. THEY HAVE PUT THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT ON NOTICE THAT IF ALGERIA'S MAIN COMPLAINTS (UNFAVORABLE TRADE BALANCE AND THE FRENCH PRO-MOROCCAN TILT) ARE NOT ACTED UPON, ALGERIA HAS OTHER FRIENDS IN FRANCE WHO MAY BE MORE HELPFUL COME 1978.

4. TAKEN ALONE, THE CRITICISM OF MITTERRAND FOR ENGAGING IN UNPATRIOTIC CONVERSATIONS ABROAD MIGHT HAVE BEEN UNHELPFUL TO THE PS IN NEXT SUNDAY'S ELECTIONS. HOWEVER, CURRENT PS CHARGES THAT RECENT US WARNINGS ABOUT THE DANGERS OF COMMUNIST ENTRY INTO EUROPEAN GOVERNMENTS ARE INTERFERENCE IN FRENCH INTERNAL AFFAIRS AND MAJORITY ALLEGATIONS ABOUT LEAKS OF GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS TO THE SOCIALISTS ARE LIKELY TO RELEGATE THE ALGIERS TRIP TO THE NON-ISSUE CATEGORY.

5. AS FOR THE VISIT'S EFFECT ON FRANCO-ALGERIAN BILATERAL RELATIONS,WE THINK THE GOF WILL INITIALLY RESENT THIS BLATANT EFFORT BY THE ALGERIANS TO PUT PRESSURE ON IT THROUGH OPPOSITION LEADER MITTERRAND AND WILL FOR THE MOMENT MAINTAIN A CERTAIN COOLNESS. BUT WE ANTICIPATE THAT THIS PHASE WILL PASS QUICKLY AND THAT THE GOF, IN ORDER TO REFURBISH FRANCE'S IMAGE
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IN THE PROGRESSIVE, THIRD WORLD AND PROTECT ITS SIZEABLE INTERESTS IN ALGERIA, WILL SOON AGAIN PROTEST ITS NEUTRALITY IN THE SAHARA AND GIVE THE IMPRESSION OF TRYING TO IMPROVE THE TRADE BALANCE AND OTHER IRRITANTS IN FRANCO-ALGERIAN RELATIONS.
RUSH

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Margaret P. Grafeld
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